

25X1A

INFORMATION REPORT

CD NO.

INTELLOFAX 4

2004-2005 Thailand/Malaya

DATE DISTR. 1 MAY 51

SUBJECT Report on the Betong Area

NO. OF PAGES 5

PLACE
ACQUIRED

NO. OF ENCLS.
(LISTED BELOW)

DATE OF INFO.

SUPPLEMENT TO
REPORT NO.

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

SOURCE

25X1X

1. The population of Betong Village (101-05, 5-45), which has increased 25 percent since the 1949 tabulation, numbers approximately 20,000 persons, of whom 85 percent* are Chinese, 15 percent* are Muslim Thais, and 5 percent* are Thais. Most of the Thais are in administrative services. In view of the present border situation, the 5 Division has sent an infantry company to be stationed in the amphur. Betong connects directly with Penang by a very good motor road. Communication with Penang is easier than communication with Yala itself.
2. Betong's primary product is rubber, with tin in second place, while Amphur Pangnagstar, between Betong and Yala, has more tin interests. The rubber business, both producing and exporting, is entirely in the hands of the Chinese. A tin mine is operated by Australian firms. Tin production is limited and methods are outdated. The richest rubber plantation owner is TAN Ngui Lhim, owner of about 10,000 rai. Since there are some 60 rubber trees planted in each rai, this would place the number of trees owned by TAN at approximately 60,000 (sic) trees. The second largest owner is LEE Sang, who has become a Thai citizen and changed his name to Chusak (aka CHOO Sak). Most owners live outside Betong in nearby communities such as Haad Yai and Penang. Except for the merchants, the Chinese population works on the rubber plantations.
3. Rubber trees in this area produce about eight months out of the year. Each worker can service some 600 trees daily. Sixty percent of the rubber belongs to the worker, and the remainder to the owner. The worker may sell his share to the owner for cash at that day's market price or sell it to other buyers if a better price is offered. The typical worker is now earning a minimum of 100 baht per day.
4. Most rubber dealers belong to one of the following leading business firms which have branch offices in all the rubber-producing districts: Siam Pak Tai, Tai Tong, and Nan Yang Rubber companies. The branch offices have buying stations, export stations, and in some places, factories, for processing the rubber. These firms, which usually offer the best price, export all the rubber produced in this district. At present, the arrangement between owners, buyers, and

~~CLASSIFICATION CONFIDENTIAL/CONTROL - U.S. OFFICIALS ONLY~~

[illegible]

Document No. 4
 No Change in Class. ☒
☐ Declassified
 Class. Changed To: TS S C
 Auth.: HR 70-2
 Date: 2-7-JUL-1978 -- Approved For Release By: 0357

25X1A

Approved For Release 2001/12/04 : CIA-RDP82-0045

CONFIDENTIAL/CONTROL - U.S. OFFICIALS ONLY

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

25X1A

- 2 -

workers appears equitable, and all are prosperous. Laborers employed by the three companies mentioned above are probably the best-paid laborers in Thailand. There is plenty of work for all. For example, TAN Ngui Lhim has 100 laborers, but could employ perhaps 1,000 if he could obtain them.

5. In Amphur Betong there is only one Chinese Association registered. The local Chinese Chamber of Commerce (CCC), of which LEE Sang is president, has a membership of about 100. Thai officials use the CCC to release official bulletins and to acquaint the Chinese with the new regulations. LEE Sang always invites the Nai Amphur and the Chief of Police to attend all meetings, which are held two or three times per month.
6. The only Chinese school in Betong is the Chong Fah School which was openly established by the CCC,** and which, with 1,200 students, is the largest and best school in the southern provinces. The school secretly receives funds from several well-known rubber merchants. It is believed that these merchants have contributed some three million baht. In the Chong Fah School, there are 28 teachers, of whom 16 are Thai. The school and its students acts as a medium for Communist propaganda directed toward the students' parents. Of the teaching staff, only a few are authorized Chinese teachers, while the others are "temporary teachers." The law permits the "temporary teachers" to practice for two years before they are required to pass official Thai examinations. This system has resulted in the school's being infiltrated by pro-Communist teachers who are spreading Communist propaganda. Among the teachers who have full Thai authorization, there are none who know enough Chinese to check on what is being taught by the Chinese teachers. The only way the authorities know about the Communist propaganda is that the Chinese themselves tell them.
7. The local Chinese Communist element comprises three classes: prosperous "capitalists," shopowners, and laborers. The "capitalists" are generally plantation owners who seldom live in the area, and whose daily income sometimes amounts to 10,000 baht. Each of these plantation owners could easily afford to make several 100,000-baht contributions annually. According to unconfirmed rumor, when TAN Ngui Lhim was asked about one month ago by the Communist bandits (sic) for a contribution of 100,000 baht, he agreed, and when the Communist representative came for the donation, he was given 400,000 baht without comment. It is also rumored that the Chinese Communist Party promised to protect TAN's life at all cost and to protect his business interests. The prosperous Chinese understand that if they refuse to donate to the Communists, they may suffer financial losses at Communist hands, or possibly be killed. Communist demands are reasonable and scaled to what the "donor" can afford.
8. Local shopowners, teachers, and labor leaders are all potential Communist leaders. They represent the underground leaders in hiding, soliciting the merchants and plantation owners.
9. Chinese laborers, who are generally peaceful and industrious, are now enjoying a boom. Since most of these laborers are pure-blooded Chinese, and uneducated, they are easy prey for the propagandists. They are especially easily influenced by Communist propaganda which plays upon the nationalistic sentiments of the Chinese, and the local Thai authorities believe that the laborers could go over to the Communists at any time. Shortly after the end of World War II, one of the Chinese leaders was arrested by the Thai Police and charged with causing unrest among the laborers. Principally because of nationalistic feeling among the Chinese, more than a thousand of them rioted, demanding the prisoner's release. When he was not released, they stormed the police station. A number of Chinese were killed in the resulting riots, which were the worst in Betong's history. It is considered possible that similar uprisings could occur again.

CONFIDENTIAL/CONTROL - U.S. OFFICIALS ONLY

CONFIDENTIAL/CONTROL - U.S. OFFICIALS ONLY

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

X1A

- 3 -

10. Many of the laborers aid the Communist guerrillas by supplying them with food and helping them to find hiding places. It does not seem likely that they will fully collaborate with the Communists, however, without very serious consideration. In comparison with the guerrillas, they live a much more enjoyable life, receive good wages, and are not repressed by officials. Chinese bandits, when arrested, are deported. None of the Chinese wish to be deported, and when faced with the sentence, usually try to bribe the officials into letting them stay in Thailand. However, it is very difficult to obtain sufficient evidence of Communist activity to convict anyone.
11. In Betong, the Communists need not hold meetings secretly, because the Thai Police, not understanding the language, has no knowledge of what is happening. The Communist position is further strengthened by the influence of the Communist Underground, which prevents their being informed on. The situation in this locality is similar to that which confronted the British in Malaya.
12. In the district of which Yala (101-20, 6-40) is the center, Communist activity includes the following: sowing Communist doctrine among the young students in Chinese schools, who pass the propaganda on to their parents; organizing contributions both for the local Communist organizations and in support of their comrades fighting the British in Malaya; and preparing future uprisings in Thailand to be coordinated with general developments outside Thailand. This activity is difficult to suppress for several reasons. For example, the students listen to their teachers' propaganda but say nothing to outsiders. Thai teachers do not know enough about the Chinese language to testify against those suspected of sowing Communist propaganda. The officials confine their efforts principally to warning that if Communist propaganda is spread in the schools, those responsible will be deported. Contributions are made secretly to the Communists, but contributors tell the authorities nothing about them. It is believed that the Communists presently need the district as a supply base for activity outside the area and therefore, they will maintain peace locally until a major effort is made from outside.
13. The local Chinese are inclined to sympathize with the guerrillas fighting in Malaya. It is believed that the guerrilla activity stems from the Free Chinese group which fought against the Japanese in Malaya, during World War II. The local Chinese think that the guerrilla activity is a form of retaliation against the British, who had promised the natives something akin to independence. Moreover, the Thailand Chinese consider the Chinese in Malaya to be natives of that country, members of the majority group, and therefore entitled to control Malaya's affairs. Consequently, the Chinese in Thailand feel rather close in ideology and aspirations to the Chinese in Malaya.
14. Local rubber plantation owners probably contribute enough funds to supply the daily needs of the guerrillas who enter Thailand. When the Communists need money, they send a reliable private soldier with a letter, bearing a Chinese Communist symbol, to some prosperous Chinese. The latter usually donates the money without question. If he does not have the money, he may set a date for the courier's return. If the bearer of the letter should be arrested by the authorities, the Communists will have lost but a single soldier who probably knows little of the main Communist organization. To date, no Chinese merchant has complained to the authorities about Communist demands.
15. Communists usually pay for food supplies obtained in Thailand, sometimes paying twice the usual price. The guerrillas cross the border in groups of ten to twenty, usually choosing little-travelled trails. They go directly to rubber plantations situated one or two days' travel from towns or main roads. Upon meeting Police patrols, they have hitherto fled without fighting, even when they had suffered casualties from Police fire. Guerrilla bands cross into Betong from Perak every week or two, remain only a few days, and then again cross the border. They have carried out no ambushes in Thailand, apparently having been ordered not to fight. They continue this policy even when attacked by the Police. The guerrillas are easily detected, because they wear green

CONFIDENTIAL/CONTROL - U.S. OFFICIALS ONLY

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

25X1A

- 4 -

uniforms, rather than disguise themselves as plantation workers. They carry no heavier arms than light machineguns, of which they have very few, and an occasional hand grenade of the Japanese type. Most of the grenades are dud.

25X6

21. The Muslim group and the Chinese do not get along well together. The Muslims, like the Malays, fear Chinese expansion and economic control. In Thailand, the Muslims enjoy special privileges to protect them from encroachment by the Chinese, and to win enough of their allegiance to prevent their supporting the Chinese. The special privileges extended to the Muslims include educational concessions, religious privileges, and control of trade moving between Malaya and the southern Thai provinces. The Malays are now cooperating closely with the Thai authorities in nearly every southern district having a large Muslim population. The only examples of non-cooperation are some common bandits operating in Narathiwat and Pattani.

25X6

23. The export of biotic medicines in unusual quantities from Betong has not been noted.
24. As for opium, the smuggled commodity has Penang as its principal destination. The principal opium smuggling route is from Haad Yai, the southern center of the opium trade, via Padang Besar, to Penang. Relatively little opium passes through Betong.

CONFIDENTIAL/CONTROL - U.S. OFFICIALS ONLY

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

25X1A

- 5 -

25X1C

These percentages total 105 percent.

Presumably the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Beijing.